

PUNCHED OR

THE LONDON CHARIVARI



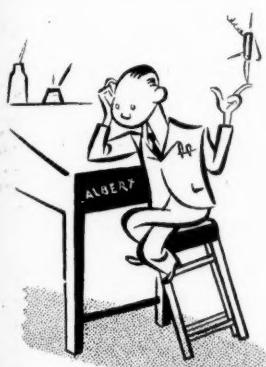
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November 20 1940

Charivaria

MUSSOLINI's military policy has its critics in Rome, we read. They frankly condemn the Duce's idea of launching a sudden offensive on the Greek frontier.

It is thought that the Italian broadcaster who recently admitted that the Greek Army was an efficient fighting machine must have taken leave of his censors.



"There is nervous tension among the Swedish and Swiss populations," says a writer. They never know when they will be invaded by Germany without the formality of having peace declared on them.

Remembering that fish-hooks are used by Eskimos as money, we can't help feeling a little sorry for Arctic pickpockets.

"Our office boy carried on with his work during a heavy air raid," states an employer. He is said to have just completed the carving of his name on his desk when the "All Clear" sounded.

Germany is said to be in great need of silver. Perhaps they want to have their clouds re-lined.

A motor-car built to the order of a Mexican merchant cost more than three thousand pounds. Some men would have wanted the tank filled with petrol for that money.

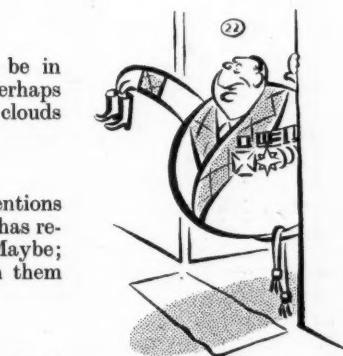
A magazine article mentions that Marshal GOERING has remarkably small feet. Maybe; but he can't have seen them for years.

Already a certain amount of progress seems to have been made towards the realization of HITLER's dream of the Benighted States of Europe.

A new type of venomous scorpion in an American Zoo has been named Goebbel. Protests from venomous scorpions are arriving at Washington by every mail.



A sports-writer mentions that when a German airman bombed a golf-course he at least had the decency to miss all those who were playing on it. We still think that he might have shouted "Fore!"



A heavyweight boxer says he is impervious to Press criticism and whatever sporting writers say about him he doesn't mind a scrap. Well, that's something, for a heavyweight boxer nowadays.

Things one might have expressed more tactfully

"Owing to circumstances beyond the control of the Council of the Institute
MR. ERIC GILLET, M.A.,
will lecture this day at 2.30 p.m."
Notice in a Birmingham Paper.

"What a disaster!
I have been made station-master
At Hamm.
Oh d---n!"

Home Guard Goings-On

Wind and Water

I AM drinking tea with Herr von Ribbentrop. When the tea comes out of the pot it is obviously tea, dark and steaming, but when I put the cup to my lips it is cold, colourless and tastes of crab-apples. "Do you call this champagne?" I demand angrily, and my host replies by dashing a little of it in my face and saying, in a voice which I recognize as little Mr. King's, that it is time for me to go.

"Ach!" I say in fluent German—"was ist die time, then?"

"Quarter to three, just after," says Mr. King, the water from his cape still running on to my pillow—"and rainin' and blowin' and black as muck!" Thanking him, I prise myself out of my blankets and expose a leg to the swirling air-currents of the Village Hall.

The gale strikes the building like a solid thing; the beams and boards shudder and groan, and a part of the corrugated iron roof flaps boomerangly; the little chain gas-fittings tinkle and scrape against their globes like the stirring of a dozen cups of tea.

Above all is the roar of the rain and the hateful music of sleeping men; these sticks, these stones, these worse than senseless things—they care nothing for the ordeal by exposure which lies before me; the next two hours will mean no more to them than a shifting of their graceless limbs, a new note in their snores, a few fleeting episodes in their unimaginable dreams. Mr. Corker alone is troubled and mumbling a little; the rest are as still as the shadows and as far removed from the world of men.

My feet are in my cold, cold boots. I have all my waistcoats, scarves and pullovers; I have my gloves, my gas-mask, my identity-card, my vacuum flask, my torch, watch and apple; I am weighed down with ammunition; I have my rifle and Mr. King's wet cape. Mr. King, drying his socks in front of the gas-fire, glances round at the dim sleepers with a friendly glance which comes to rest upon his own waiting bed. I glance round at them with hatred and walk heavily to the door.

"No, dear," says Mr. Corker distinctly as I am sucked out into the trough of the violent night.

It is raining and blowing and as black as muck. Standing in what is known to some as the sentry-box, to others as the shelter, and to yet others as something quite different, I wonder how long it will take me to get really

cold. I imagine about a quarter of an hour; by three-fifteen I shall be stiffening up, and by four-forty-five frozen solid. I shall be unable to break away to rouse Mr. Benn, who will sleep on with the rest of them until the woman comes to clean. They will miss me then and run out in a panic, only to find that I have been thawed out by the morning sun and have trickled away between the floor-boards. I shall be posted as a deserter, and bring my mother's grey hairs in shame down to the grave.

The rain sweeps in horizontally above and below the shelter door, a piece of square board hinged in the middle of the frame and covering about two-fifths of its area. The shelter itself is an annexe to derelict chicken-house, and shares its back wall. It is built of untrimmed pieces of tree, to which the slippery bark still clings, and is lined throughout with wire-netting. I have often speculated on the reason for this, and can only think that the acoustics must have proved faulty.

The shelter is too low for me to stand upright. When I try I find that I can move the roof slightly by shifting my head from side to side like a Hindu dancer, and when I retract my neck into my shoulders and bend at the knees the wire-netting retains my forage-cap by its two little buttons and holds it firmly. I set about freeing it, gently at first; after a minute or so I use force. *Per-ping-ping-per-pong-dong-rattle-rattle-rattle*, goes one of the buttons. I stoop and bang my gloved hand about on the floor, but only knock over my vacuum-flask, which rolls complacently out under the door into a deep puddle. I fumble my way out to search for it, my rifle following me faithfully with a dull splash. Inside again I hunt the button by cautiously shaded torchlight. It has disappeared through the floor-boards, and I straighten up resignedly, striking my head on the roof.

I console myself by reflecting that these adventures are helping to pass the time. I look at my watch. I have been out here six minutes. This, I can see, is going to be a clock-watching vigil, in which every five minutes takes ten to pass. I decide not to look at my watch again for a long time.

Some time ago a piece of timber was knocked out of the front of our shelter so that the sentry could observe invaders without leaning out over the

door and cricking his neck. Suddenly stricken by conscience I now gaze through this loophole. I can see nothing. The night is even blacker than I thought. It occurs to me that the loophole is letting in very little of the weather, and I shine my torch at it through my fingers. There is no gap there. It has been filled up by a board which says:

PROSECUTED
TRESPASSERS WILL BE

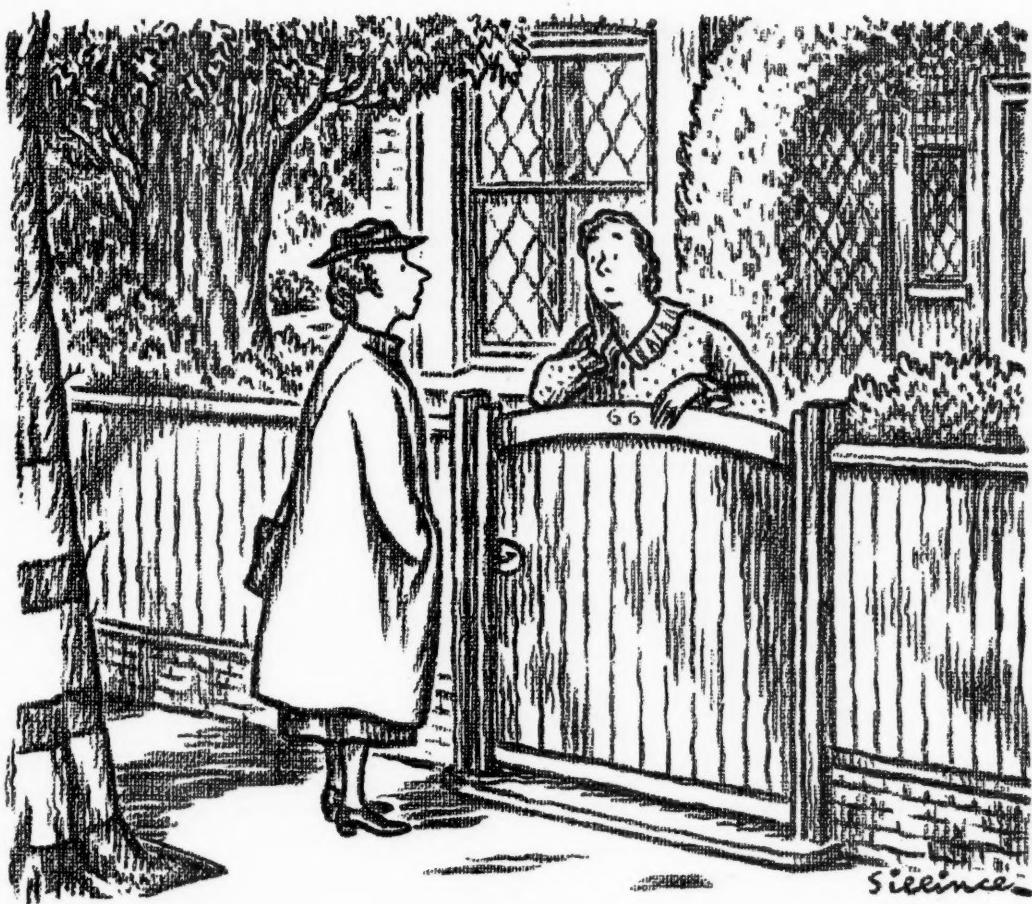
I strike out at this announcement with my hand so that it disappears from sight and admits a miniature whirlwind which fills the shelter with sound, fury and much water, whipping off my cap and soaking me through down to the first button of my great-coat. Whoever put the thing there was right. It is more use there, especially as it bears no German translation, and I pass five uncomfortable but useful minutes in getting it in place again.

Denied admittance, the whirlwind takes itself off under the door, presently returning with reinforcements in an endeavour to tear my retreat up by its shallow roots and whirl it away over the Village Hall. All architecture designed to endure must, I have heard, yield a little to the wind. The shelter yields generously in all directions, and has an advantage over most buildings in that the wind can pass through its numberless gaps practically without resistance. The same applies to the rain. I begin to wonder whether it would not be warmer outside.

Inside it is certainly very cold. I estimate that it would take me half an hour to stiffen up, and unless I get some exercise soon I shall find that I wasn't far wrong. After a keen glance outside at the invisible moor-I begin to run. I do not leave the shelter to do this, and after a hundred paces at the double I begin to feel the circulation returning. After two hundred paces, breathing deeply and lifting my knees well up, I pause. My elbows are sore, and my head aches from repeated contact with the roof; some of the ammunition has jumped out of my pocket, and my cape is back-to-front. But I am glowing. I am warm. I am—shades of Napoleon—sleepy!

This must be fought sternly, this stealthy drowsiness. If I go to sleep

and never might Plato I believe its hard till I soft apple puddin We mud already tea. After again the g. Villag And a fin



*"And last night they dropped a bomb in Mrs. Thornhill's garden!"
"Gracious! Whatever were the wardens doing?"*

and the rain changes to snow I may never wake up. Besides, the enemy might steal upon me, or even the Platoon Commander.

I will eat my apple to keep awake. I bend down and feel in the corner for its hard round shape. I find nothing till I take off my glove; then I find a soft trampled mess. Alas, my poor apple! Disgusted, I kick it out into the puddle, and the wind howls in derisive triumph.

Well, my vacuum-flask is there, muddy but unbroken, and with fingers already cooling I pour myself a little tea. It is time for me to run again. After another hundred up I lean against the wire-netting, listening to the gale roaring over the moor and the Village Hall roof booming dimly. And as I run and rest, and rest and run, I find myself wondering what will

become of us all when this business is over . . .

This happy band of brothers will be disbanded, I suppose, after the war. I am unable to think of anything else likely to gather together the divergent existences of Mr. Corker, Mr. King, Mr. Curtis, Mr. Benn and all the rest of us. Possibly we shall have annual reunion suppers at "The George and Dragon," growing garrulously reminiscent (especially Mr. Corker), and finding it rather hard to believe that we once devoted one night in five to playing at soldiers; that we haunted the dark countryside with loaded firearms, honestly believing that we might have to use them. I find, without embarrassment, that I have a warm spot in my heart—if nowhere else—for Mr. King, Mr. Corker, Mr. Benn and the rest. I feel a sudden uprush of

confidence that with men like these we shall win the war, and I wonder how often they think such nice thoughts about me when they are all alone in this unspeakable shelter at half-past four in the morning . . . Half-past four? Great Scott! I hope I haven't been running and resting in my sleep, because I see from my watch it's ten minutes to five, and Mr. Benn is still in bed, whereas he ought to have been out here five minutes ago!

As I shake Mr. Benn's massive shoulder with a frozen hand, it strikes me that there is something quite beautiful about the gentle snores rising around us. They make a pleasant contrast with the storm outside, and will serve me for a kindly lullaby.

But Mr. Benn has no soul. He says, sitting on the edge of his bed, that he hopes they all choke in their sleep.

Answer to Tyrants

SUBTLY preparing—every promise broken—
From the far North lands to the Isles of Greece
Before the flames of Freedom could be woven
They flung their gauntlet in the face of Peace.

Swift were the words, the deeds of the dictators,
Unerringly they spoke from perjured lips,
Yet there are German ruins, Roman craters—
What of the ships, O Italy, what of the ships?

Democracy has learned her dreadful lesson,
And nightly, as in sorrow for her sin,
Salutes Durazzo, Hamburg, Munich, Essen,
And pays her downcast homage to Berlin. EVOE.

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Only a Field-Marshall's Baton

IT was Napoleon, I believe, who said that every soldier carried a field-marshall's baton in his knapsack. I should point out, to forestall parliamentary questions, that the Emperor did not intend his remark to be taken literally. In the modern British Army, at any rate, there is no rule compelling a private soldier to encumber himself with anything of the kind. In all my long career I have only once heard of a soldier who did literally carry a field-marshall's baton in his knapsack. That soldier, I needly hardly say, was myself.

It was in those days before the Second Zulu War that seem so far away now—as indeed they did even then. I was a private in the Sandshire Yeomanry. One Sunday afternoon I was strolling through the fields near our camp looking for mushrooms when I suddenly tripped and fell heavily to the ground. There was nothing very unusual in that. But on looking round for the cause I found, half hidden in a tussock of grass, a field-marshall's baton. Whether some passing field-marshall had flung it down in a temper and forgotten about it, or whether it had been stolen by gipsies, or whether it had always been there I never discovered. There at any rate it was. I picked it up and put it in my knapsack. And as a careful study of the advertisement columns of the Press failed to reveal any information about it, it seemed to me that I was quite justified in keeping it.

So I was now the possessor of a field-marshall's baton. But that was not enough. The inevitable question arose: what was I to do with it? I was then, and am now, a very practical-minded man, and the first thing that occurred to me was to make some practical use of my find. Here I came up against a blank wall. For all the hundred-and-one odd jobs that give variety to a soldier's life the baton seemed quite useless. It was no use as a toasting-fork; it was no use as a pipe-rack; it was no use as a kettle-holder. I could not even do any conjuring tricks with it. It was, in fact, a positive encumbrance to me. I was always leaving it about and tripping over it, or getting it mixed up with my knife and fork. I do honestly believe that if Fate had not intervened I should have put it back in the field where I found it. It was a pity I did not.

At that time I had never heard of Napoleon's aphorism, or indeed of Napoleon himself. But some weeks after my find, Colonel Backminster happened to quote the saying in a little talk he was giving us on the importance of not

confusing morale with infiltration tactics. From that moment I was a changed man. I began to realize that I had been marked out for a peculiar destiny. For I knew for a fact that not one of my fellow-soldiers had a field-marshall's baton in his knapsack.

Henceforth I was very careful of the baton. Very often when I had a moment to myself I would take it out and look at it lovingly, turning it over and over in my hands, or holding it up against the light until tears came into my eyes. But whether on parade, or at kit inspection, or at afternoon tea, I kept my baton carefully in my knapsack. I was certain that at last the hour would strike.

It is very difficult to analyse my feelings in those days. Sometimes while looking at my baton I felt that I was actually turning into a field-marshall. Perhaps I already was one. I lost all inclination to pursue the ordinary course of becoming a field-marshall by promotion. It seemed absurd that I should have to be a subaltern when all the time I possessed a field-marshall's baton. I even stopped cleaning my buttons and threw away my metal polish. Lost in a dream, I shaved only once a week. I have no doubt that this negligence would eventually have drawn a rebuke on my head had not Fate intervened again.

One morning I was electrified by the news that we were to be inspected by a real field-marshall—none other than Field-Marshall Sir Everard Syme-Bludgeon, one of the veterans of the Triangular War. This was the moment I had been waiting for; and when that afternoon the Field-Marshall, accompanied by Colonel Backminster, began to pass along the serried ranks, not a soldier on the barrack square can have been so tense with expectation as I. I knew now what I had to do.

The Field-Marshall walked slowly along the lines, now and then stopping for a chat on Minoan Art or Astrology. He looked old, very old, and very lonely. My heart went out to him. Field-marshals, I suppose, are always lonely, for there are so few of them.

He reached my place in the line and as he did so I dropped my baton. He stopped abruptly. He stooped and picked it up, looking me quickly up and down. For a moment his eyes gleamed with a new wild hope. It was obvious that his lonely soul was stirred to the depths.

"Er—look here—are you a field-marshall?" he asked at last.

The question took me aback, though I was half expecting it. I hesitated, hardly knowing what to say. If I said "Yes" he might ask me what I was doing in the ranks; if I said "No" he might try to take my baton away from me. There was a long silence. Colonel Backminster was already tugging at the Field-Marshall's arm. With a grunt he returned the baton to me and passed on down the line. My opportunity had passed, never to return.

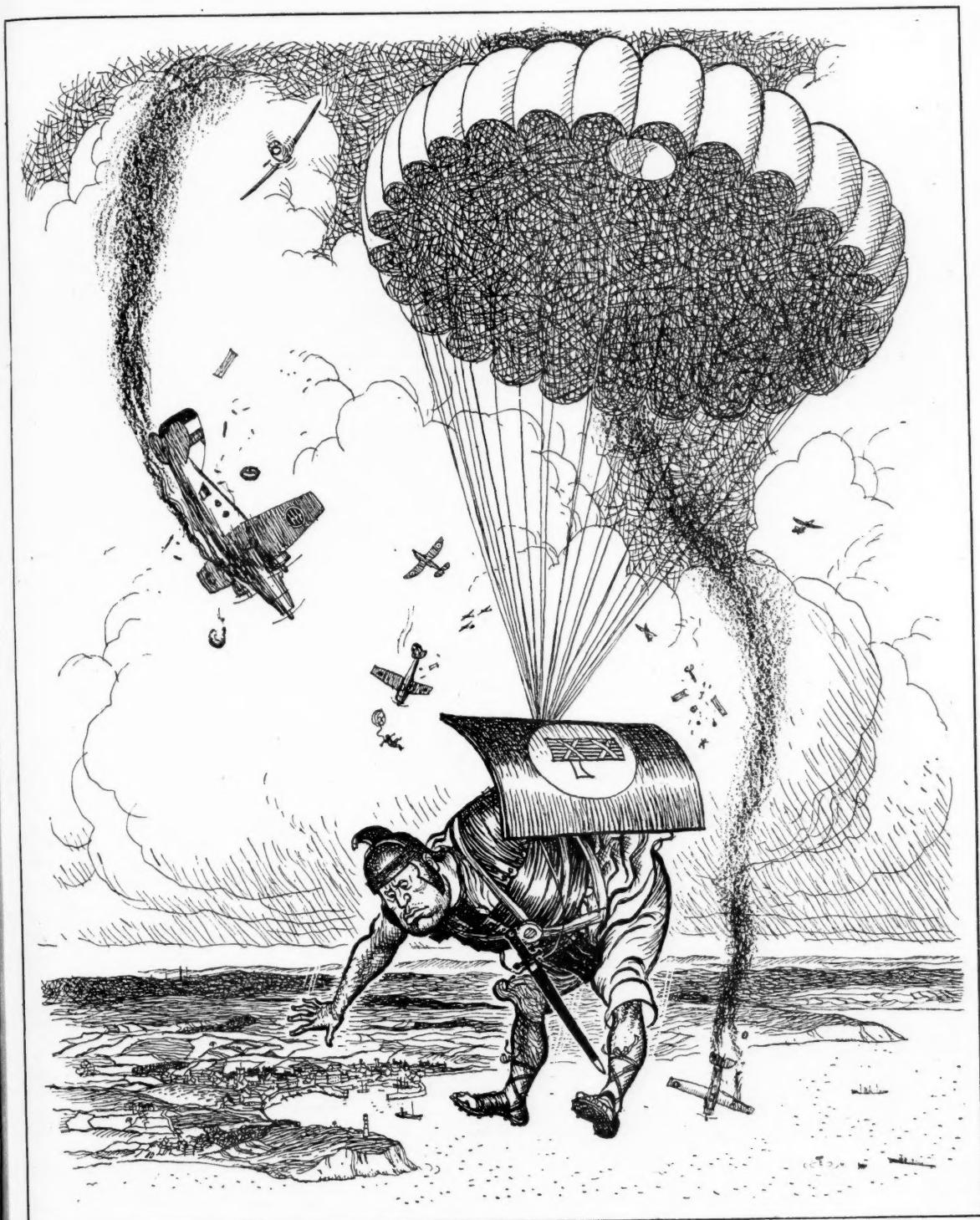
I passed many days and nights in futile remorse. Yet it is difficult to see what I could have done. I realized now that there were disadvantages about the possession of a field-marshall's baton. The responsibilities were too great. I began to repent of my folly. As for the baton, I hated the sight of the thing. And so a few weeks later an advertisement might be seen in the local paper:

"For Sale, cheap, Field-Marshall's Baton, in good condition. Or would exchange for five-gallon drum of metal polish."

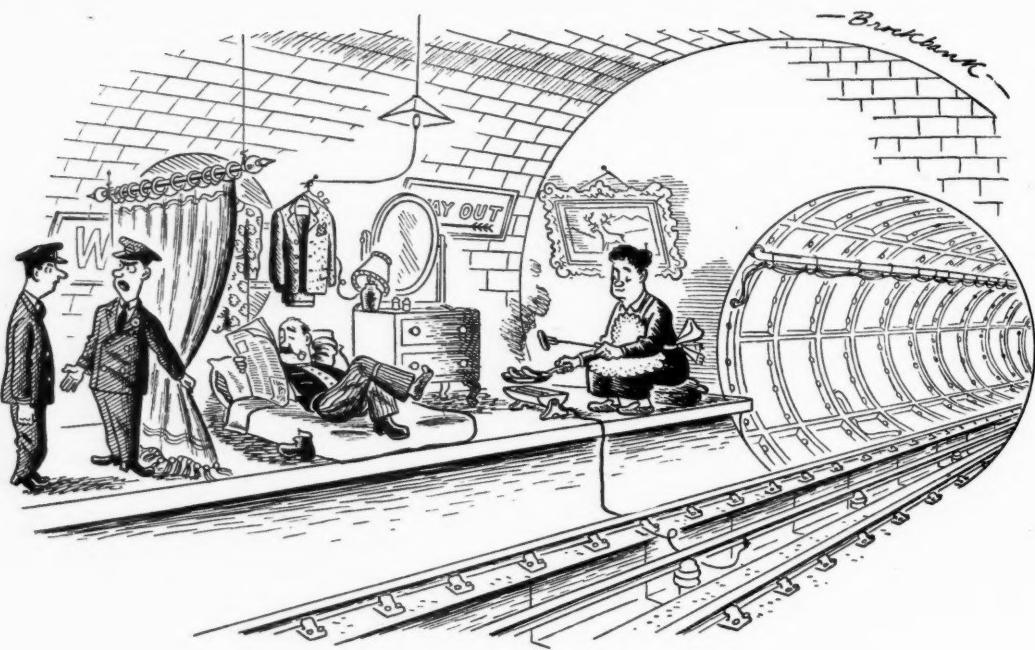
Martial Moments

"Therefore let us glance behind us as we look our enemy in the face. And be prepared to spring in the opposite direction—Tangier."

Major-General Fuller in "*Evening Standard*."
We'll do that by numbers first.



THE ROMAN INVASION, 1940 A.D.



"What did I tell you? Give them an inch and they take a mile."

More Flags

or "A T I"

TRUNDLING up and down the great river—and believe it or not, we have trundled well over 2,000 (land) miles since the end of August—we still from time to time turn to the International Code of Signals and there find intellectual refreshment. For this great work is like the said great river—at each inspection you see something new. And, as our custom is, we would refresh you too.

Take the fine group

A T I.

A—blue and white, for the Navy; T—red, white and blue, for Britain, and I—black on yellow, a flag used in the Army, we believe, to indicate an Indian latrine. Anyhow, a good Imperial hoist.

And what does it signify?

It signifies:

"THERE IS NO NEED FOR ALARM."

But when, you may say, would the mariner wish to spend time in bending and hoisting three flags with such a message? If there is need for alarm he will indicate the cause and, if he can,

the remedy, by the appropriate signals, such as:

H B X—"HAWSER OR ROPE HAS FOULED MY PROPELLER,"

followed, of course, by:

L O M—"HAVE YOU A SPARE PROPELLER?"

or one of the medical hoists, like

L W Q—"RASH LOOKS LIKE ROSE COLOURED SPOTS,"

or (a signal of which many will be glad to know):

F O Q—"ENGINES ARE DEFECTIVE AND VERY DIFFICULT TO RESTART IF ONCE STOPPED."

(We cannot, by the way, pass "restart," even if it is said with flags.)

Or the troubled mariner may use (though I am not clear how) the delightful G J J, which means:

"I AM STOPPED IN DENSE FOG."

I say, "I am not clear how," because few mariners I know would think of hoisting three flags in a dense fog to communicate any important

thought. I shall be told, I suppose, that they may send it by Morse with the whistle or siren. That would be "long blast, long, short—short, long, long, long,—short, long, long, long." But by the time that had been sent and received, surely the other ship would have run you down?

(Well, we won't argue about that.)

Or he might hoist L V I—one of the most wordy but delightful groups in the Code. L V I means—

"CAN YOU SUGGEST ANY MEANS WHEREBY MY RADIO APPARATUS COULD BE MADE SERVICEABLE?"

But when, for goodness' sake, you say, would the mariner want to say that? What would be the *circumstances*? What sort of answer could the receiving vessel make—not knowing for example, what is the *matter* with the radio apparatus?

Our answer to these pertinent questions is "We haven't the least idea." But (rare, we think, among mariners) we have actually made this signal. The King was about to

broadcast and our little "wireless" went phut. So we tried L V I on the celebrated shore-station at —, where Mr. — is generally ready with a neat riposte in bunting. He was, as he confessed later, flummoxed. The best he could do was

U B—"YOU SHOULD MAN YOUR RADIO ROOM."

To which we replied, rather prettily (we think):

G J U—"I HAVE FOLLOWED YOUR ADVICE WITHOUT SUCCESS. PLEASE ADVISE FURTHER."

Or—to go back to the troubled mariner—he might, on the morning after, for example, send:

H C Q—"HEADACHE IS VERY SEVERE,"
coupled, perhaps, with

P C P—"TONGUE IS COATED."

He might say:

K M X—"PAIN IN BELLY IN ONE SPOT"

or

K O J—"PARALYSIS ALL OVER,"

or (a rather snobbish hoist):

J P B—"YOUR NAME IS NOT ON MY LIST. SPELL IT."

Or

E H Y—"HOW MUST I STEER TO AVOID THE CENTRE OF THE CYCLONE, HURRICANE, TYPHOON?"

There are innumerable signals to indicate misfortune and invite assistance, information, or advice. This is easily intelligible; for when there is no misfortune present the mariner does not say much, or want to say anything. He sits and thinks. Certainly, unless challenged, he will not deem it necessary or fitting to hoist a signal to say that the weather has cleared (Q I Q), or that calms prevail (C R X). Challenged, of course, he knows how to reply: and if a passing ship says:

R S—"IS ALL WELL WITH YOU?"

pat comes the answer:

A U L—"ALL IS WELL."

(How delightful, by the way, to be able to do *italics* with flags!).

"But *when*," you say, returning firmly but admirably to the original point, "will the healthy mariner ever wish to signal 'There is no need for alarm'?" Only the wordy, hysterical, landlubber, who does not have to communicate by flags, would think it worth while to say such a thing."

Well, we will tell you; for we have used this signal. We remember well

that sad day when the news came of the French collapse. It came to this out-of-the-way corner of the island by the One o'clock News. A great many mariners, the sun being "definitely" over the yard-arm (B. S. T.), were assembled at the celebrated "local"; and though no heart quailed, there were one or two, shall we say, expressions of regret. England was, after all, alone and all that. We therefore returned to our ship and hoisted:

A T I.

The signal-station ran up the answering pennant, and a thrill ran through the little fleet. From that moment the absence of France from parade did not matter. She was on leave. She is.

It is a pity that the civilian cannot express himself also in this gay and decorative fashion. I suggest that all

loyal and stout-hearted citizens should purchase the flags:

A T I

and fly them constantly from their rigs. Also the signal

A U L.

There may be a law against this. But who cares? And, strangely enough, we do not think there is.

A.U.L.P.H.

○ ○

Without Comment

"In Cononley at the 10.30 a.m. Service we are to have a Parade of the Home Guards, A.R.P. Wardens, Members of the First Aid Point and W.V.S., and the Girl Guides. They will be led, we hope, as in previous years by the local band. The Choir will sing the anthem—'What are These,' and the Service will be of a National character."—*Parish Magazine*.



"She wants the ones I'm wearing."

Memory and Mrs. Battlegate

"Ah, memory, memory!" said Mrs. Battlegate.

The scene was not, as one might have supposed, the old home of Mrs. Battlegate's youth, fallen into decay. (No. 6, The Avenue, is, on the contrary, still standing and has actually borne the wear and tear of the years a good deal better than Mrs. Battlegate herself.)

It wasn't even Haworth Parsonage by moonlight, nor—but perhaps it will be simpler to come into the open and explain at once that the scene was simply the Little Fiddle-on-the-Green Spitfire Sewing Circle, now held in Canon Pramm's back drawing-room owing to the presence of soldiers, evacuated children, A.R.P. and W.V.S. in practically every other building in the parish.

And Mrs. Battlegate said "Ah, memory, memory!" in a voice which, though penetrating, was no sadder than usual.

(There is very little *joie-de-vivre* about Mrs. Battlegate, but probably General Battlegate wouldn't care about it if there were.)

Miss Pin was the only person who took much notice. She said "Yes, indeed," and those who have heard her replying to the longer monologues of Mr. Pancatto, her literary employer, understood that the phrase came automatically and meant practically nothing whatever.

Anyway, Mrs. Battlegate took no notice of it. She gave vent to another utterance addressed, as usual, to no one in particular.

"As a girl," said Mrs. Battlegate, "I was quite able to read through a column of *The Times* once, and once only, and then repeat it—word for word—by heart."

"Which column was it?" asked Laura. "Could you do the Births, Marriages and Deaths?"

Mrs. Battlegate replied, rather distantly, that any column of *The Times* answered her purpose, which was merely the training of a rather remarkable faculty bestowed upon her by Dame Nature for her own inscrutable purposes. Her dear father, however, had always preferred the leading article to anything else.

At this point the conversation, if conversation it could be called, languished absolutely. Laura said afterwards that she thought most people were wondering if Mrs. Battlegate still kept up her accomplishment and meant to give us an example of it.

But no. Mrs. Battlegate had taken a pocket handkerchief out of her bag, and was contemplating a knot in it.

"Twenty-five years ago," she said, "this would not have been necessary."

Some of us—again according to Laura—were not certain whether it was the handkerchief or the knot that wouldn't have been necessary twenty-five years ago—but no one addressed any direct inquiry to Mrs. Battlegate on the subject, so she said: "Ah, memory, memory!" all over again.

This, for no reason—unless it was another of Dame Nature's inscrutabilities—suddenly led to quite a brisk spate of conversation.

Mrs. Pledge said that she herself could remember names but not faces, and Miss Plum said that with her it was all faces and no names, but Elsie Dodge was just the other way on—poor dear.

And old Lady Flagge told us that she seldom remembered the happenings of the previous day, but had a most accurate recollection of a journey that she had taken to Scotland with her parents at the age of two years and three months. (Most of the rest of us, for the matter of that, have a fairly accurate recollection of it also, owing to the number of times that we have heard about it.)

Poor Miss Flagge tried to produce some very early memory of her own—connected, so far as one could make out, with a hoop and stick—but old Lady Flagge silenced her at once by saying that it hadn't happened at all, and in any case it wasn't a hoop and

stick, but a battledore and shuttlecock, and that her daughter had in many ways been a very trying and difficult child.

One could see Aunt Emma preparing to speak next, and Cousin Florence, Miss Littlemug and one or two others had also had exactly the same idea—and personally one would have backed Miss Littlemug to the last farthing if it hadn't already been earmarked for the Inland Revenue Account—but Mrs. Battlegate romped in ahead of everyone.

"Believe it or not," she said—loudly and yet quietly, if you see what I mean—"I have no faintest recollection of the purpose for which I tied this knot in my handkerchief."

"Could it have been to remind you of something?" asked Laura.

"Yes," said Mrs. Battlegate. "But what?"

One or two suggestions were offered—and declined by Mrs. Battlegate almost as soon as made. She asserted that she had already posted her letters—one to her sister in South Africa, and a postcard to the laundry—that she had spoken to the cook that morning and left nothing unsaid—and that General Battlegate always bought his own tobacco.

"I have a feeling," said Mrs. Battlegate, "that it was *something to do with the war*."

"How to win it," suggested Laura—but in a very low voice that passed unheard.

"Anything to do with bombs?" said Miss Dodge—and more than one of those present felt inclined to point out to her that bombs are usually remembered quite easily and without the aid of any artificial stimulus.

"I have it! Your gas-mask!" cried Miss Littlemug—and she pointed the scissors in such a manner at Mrs. Battlegate's very head that everybody in the room flinched with the exception of Mrs. Battlegate, who simply said No, it wasn't that; her gas-mask was safe in the keeping of Toddie's Café in Fiddle Magna where she had left it a week or two ago under a tea table and from whence it was to be fetched next time she had enough petrol to take the car out.

There were several other suggestions, but they were not very well received by Mrs. Battlegate; and Aunt Emma's effort—that Mrs. Battlegate wished to remind herself to arrive punctually at the next W.I. Committee Meeting—was an absolute failure and practically



broke up the Spitfire Sewing Circle ten minutes earlier than usual.

The extraordinary thing was that neither Laura nor I could think of anything all the evening except the knot in Mrs. Battlegate's handkerchief.

And in the end Laura rang her up and asked whether she'd remembered yet.

"Thank you," said Mrs. Battlegate down the telephone. "Thank you. I have, and again I haven't."

"And when you had, was it anything to do with the war?"

"There again," returned Mrs. Battlegate, "I can only reply both Yes and No. I find that the knot in my handkerchief was tied, by my own hand, on my way down to the village in order to remind myself of another knot, in another handkerchief, that I left at home. When I went to look at it, however, lying precisely where I had placed it upon my dressing-table, memory most unfortunately failed me again. Twenty-five years ago it couldn't have happened."

Laura, one is glad to add, had replaced the receiver before making the suggestion that what Mrs. Battlegate wanted to remember was probably something to do with the last war and not this one at all.

E. M. D.

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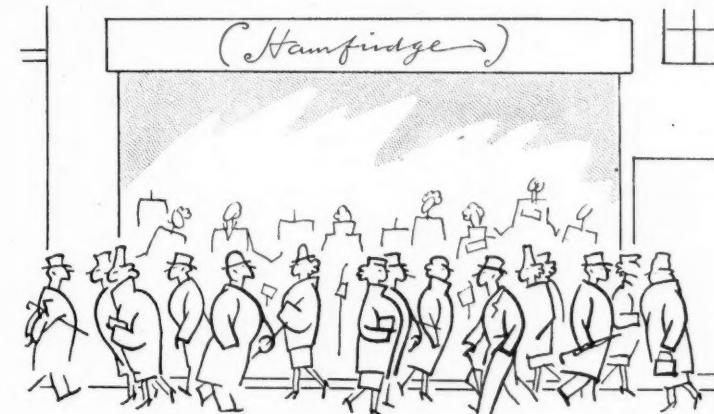
At the Pictures

IN MANCHESTER

MANCHESTER has the first European showing of the film *Four Sons* (Director: ARCHIE MAYO)—the first official European showing, for I read that there was what is called a "sneak preview," unadvertised, at Bury. This sort of thing often indicates a doubt about how the audience will behave; here is a tragic story, and the scene is Czechoslovakia between 1936 and 1939, and an audience's reactions to tragic stories with a near-this-war background were assumed, perhaps, to be unpredictable.

I don't know why they should have been. The elements of this one are almost wearisomely familiar, and I should think the details of the background make comparatively little difference.

Four sons, and a tragic story?—the mother's, of course, is the big part, and EUGENIE LEONTOVICH plays it impressively well. The family are Sudeten Germans; of the four sons, one goes to America before the Hitler trouble starts and the others are variously



Tongueless

HUMAN NATURE

killed. One becomes a Nazi and helps to betray his country in 1939. One (DON AMECHE) is killed as a patriotic Czech. The youngest is killed fighting in Poland, a Nazi conscript.

But they are all really good American boys. It takes more than a stiff turn-down collar and a hat with a feather in the back to make DON AMECHE seem a credible Czech, at least to English audiences. For some of the other characters the producer has sought credibility by the dubious, arguable but possibly effective device of choosing players with foreign accents; although this, of course, makes the family of four cheerfully American sons seem even more out of place.

These are the points one talks about, but admittedly they vanish into unim-

portance if one does get interested in the story. Except during the moments of pursuit and search, which never seem to fail in any story, I was not able to. It is all, I repeat, too familiar. You know the outlines of the plot as soon as you see the characters. In some films this prescience does not matter; but the only mitigating circumstances here are the photography—there is also much beautiful country to look at—and the acting of EUGENIE LEONTOVICH. Her scenes are nearly always moving, and the picture's theme is considerable enough; it is worthy (that convenient adjective), and few of us will fail to approve of its anti-Nazi implications; it is well made. But the atmosphere of genuine tragedy is missing.

R. M.



"... Several houses were destroyed in a South-West suburb, including MY OWN! You never saw such a mess in your life. My wife and I were under the scullery table at the time, and I said to her, I said..."

To Open the Roads

THIS is a song for wanderers by one who could never sit still,

One whose delight was the face of the world and the roads that ran thereon
To this place and to that place, and to come and go at his will

And to see whatever there was to see from Bath to Babylon.

And here is a summer and autumn passed and never a journey made,

No new stamps on the passport, never a frontier crossed; For the wanderer's turned to warrior now—but wistfully, I'm afraid,

He sighs for a season he won't get back, a summer and autumn lost.

And such a summer of summers it was! And the car laid up in her shed,

Her G.B. plates and the Michelin maps regretfully locked away;

Golden summer and autumn gold—and the roads all empty and dead

And the quays of Calais as far forgot as the name of holiday.

Yet the roads were there as they always were and the journey's-ends of yore—

The Jotunheim and the Tatras and the sun-kissed Appenines,

Titisee and the Forest and the long Illyrian shore,

Chestnut-bloom by the Ebro and, by Mittenwald, the pines.

The roads were there as they always were, to carry the wheels a-dance—

The dark road over the Furka, the white road into Rome, The hairpin hills of the Pyrenees, the long fast straits of France;

The roads were there . . . but the roads were closed and the wanderer held at home.

To dream of a hundred hostleries at eve of a traveller's day (Los Pinos, Weisse Rössl, Savoia, Faisan d'Or)—

Albergo, pension, gasthaus, inn and estaminet—

All closed, verboten, interdit . . . No Entry; this is War!

And war of course is a major thing, and in war must men forget

Such minor things as a sunlit lake or a hill that traced the eye,

Or the comfort of lovely places . . . And yet, and yet, and yet I shall remember them now and then and be thinking:

"By and by

I will come back to see you . . ." And it may not be amiss, For a man fights best for his fancy and fancies are many as men,

And I was ever a wanderer and I shall be thinking this:

"Win, and our roads come back to us; win—somehow, somehow—

And all these barriers crash in the dust and the roads are open again."

H. B.

• •

Molesworth and the Battle of Britain

Diary of booms, whizzes, wams, explodings and headmasters.

Oct. 30. I am called to mr Trimp (headmasters) study and all chortle they think I get the kane. Deaf master step out from behind stuffed bear and sa haha. Chiz knock on door and find Gran there chiz chiz chiz. Would rather have the kane. Also pop in uniform but only weedy kaptaian so dare not show him as new bugs father a General. Gran sa molesworth 2 and me to go to Canda weedy as no bombs there. Pop and mr Trimp sa this is not allowed but Gran refuse to believe she sa she will see to it herself. Mr trimp offer pop a sherry (n.b. very like his daily tonic for the blud ?) Go out and Pop have to salute new bugs father who hapned to be there but isaacs father only home guard so Pop give him stiff look. molesworth 2 assemble all new bugs and sa he haf 10000 strokes of the kane. Mr. trimp sa very like rain tomow.

Oct. 31. Strong sunshine.

Nov. 1. Grate consternation rains as deaf master called up for duty at listning post. mr trimp sa he feel there haf been some mistake. molesworth 2 hope to get shortcake biskit so bring Miss Pringle a dandelion. She sa mother nature about to sleep through winter and think dandlion intresting. Molesworth 2 sa he keen to press it in psalms of the bible about time he opned it. Have wizard game with Peason obby obby onker my first conker. Whizz string for record wam and hit deaf master on nut. He give conduc mark to isaacs (throwing stones).

Nov. 2. Skool pigs birthday. Give presents 3 conkers (baked) dead leafs and mars bar.

Nov. 3. Skool pig in grate pain.

Nov. 5. Weedy latin. Mr trimp sa all boys who kno gender rhimes to put up their hand. Don't kno but put up hand as this frequently a good wheeze. Chiz mr Trimp ask me hem-hem but just then mighty air-rade warning all to



"I've invited the Hendersons over for the air-raid, George."

the shelter double. Cheers cheers fuste decent thing the hun haf done. Deaf master give all class conduc mark for going out and fotherington-tomas blub he want to bring in his fairy cycle. Wizard dog fight messershimts crash in hundreds. All clear sound and deaf master dash into shelter he is bats.

Nov. 10. Gran write and sa vicars wife haf said that children not allowed to canada but she will only believe if she hear from prime minister himself. She do not care what the papers sa.

Nov. 14. Grate celebrations as Miss pringle and curate to be married hem-hem. Mr trimp make long speech and call on Pearson to present skool fish slice. Miss Pringle blush like anything and twist handkerchief. She sa she want us kiddies not to forget our nature lessons and she will give wee prize at end of term for best raffia bag chiz. She is weedy give me merna loy every time. New bugs very affected by miss pringles speech and fotherington-tomas ask her to be mother to him. She sa if very good 5 minutes longer before bed and game of oranges lemons. Ugh. 90 boos.

Nov. 15. Isaacs start making raffia bag.

Nov. 16. New misteress come instead of miss pringle. Coo she is just like ginger rogers with lipstick and everything. Tell this to matron who sniff and sa she thought her very ordinary girl. She also give me stiff dose of mixture so will not mention agane. molesworth 2 now zoom by he sa he short range bomber and haf shot down skool pig in flames and scored direct hits on valuable objectives on deaf masters trousis. Soon deaf master zoom by to and howls appear. Find molesworth 2 very grave he sa he haf been shot down and he mourning himself. He is bats.

Nov. 18. Pearson come to me he sa terrible thing haf hapned he is in love with new misteress. He is a girly so i

slosh him and he slosh me. He is a dirty roter as I haf said pax and sa no fair but he throw blotch pellets at me. All hit deaf master so boo. Find molesworth 2 with hand full of grass blubbing like billyo. He sa he burying himself and i sa about time good riddance to bad rubbish. fotherington-tomas is chief mute he sa death is very beatiful so tuough him up. Isaacs still working on raffia bag he sa to be biggest in the world, in moon in space. He not certain of winning prize as he kno two new bugs working behind closed doors.

Nov. 19. Gran write she haf called personally on steamship company and it nonsense no children can go to Canada. She sa mrs Sturgess-green kno two who are *actually there*.

Nov. 21. We haf wizard singing men of Harlock and minstrel boy to the war haf gone. I sing very beatifully it bring tears to my eyes but all sa shut-up. Later I see Pearson gazing up at new misteress window. He sa will I give her book of Beatiful Thoughts which he haf bagged from fotherington-tomas. He sa go on o you might but deaf master pass with flowers and take new misteress off to Cozy Teashop hot toast yum-yum. Pearson downcast and throw Beatiful Thoughts at isaacs. Mr trimp sa no more air-rades after today.

Nov. 22. Miss latin, weedy french, alg, geog, arith and Eng. owing to sirens.

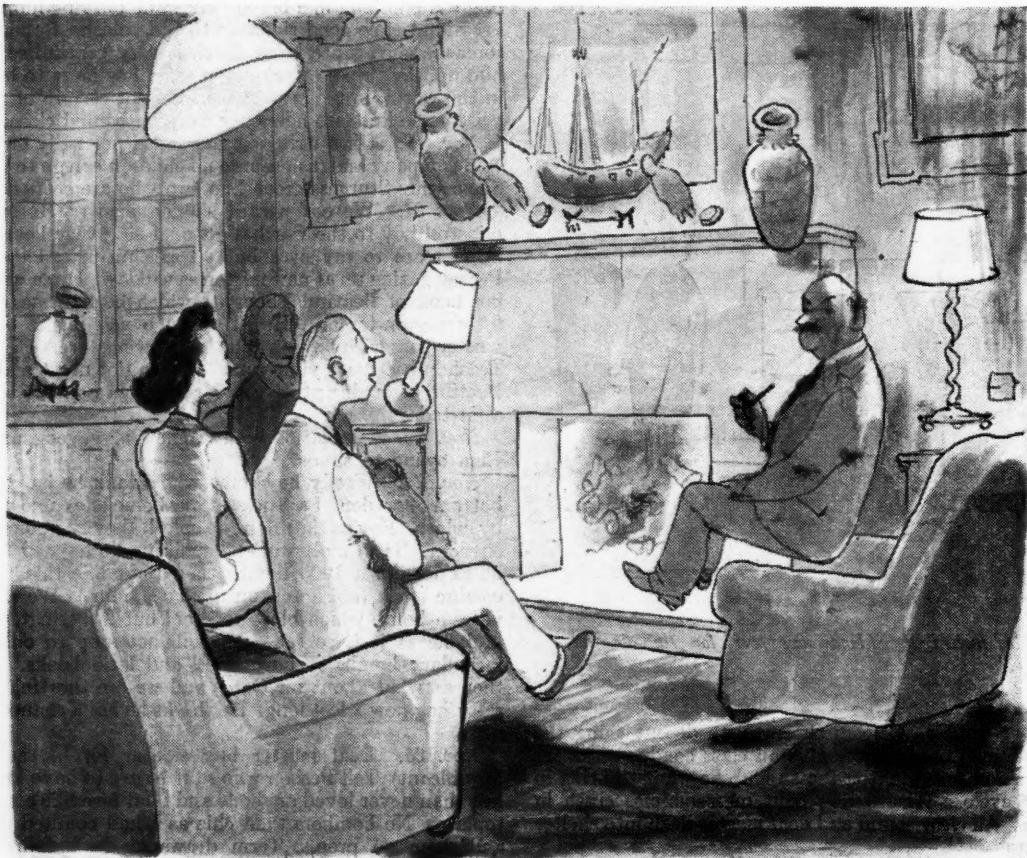
Nov. 24. Weedy boy come who swank he haf bomb at bottom of garden. I sa sucks at our home one came whizzing by splosh. Boy sa they dont go splosh they go boom so hard cheddar. Then molesworth 2 spoil it who hapned to be by he sa we haf a 1000 bombs they went like this. He get conduc mark (noise and unruly behaviour.) We all sa we voted a bomb which blow up skool but fotherington-tomas blub he sa it is so sad. He will not stop so only votes incendiary bombs to burn skool and latin books. Pearson then sa what about mr Oates and we are thortful. Isaacs raffia bag now 2 feet long. He thinks he haf a chance for the prize.

Nov. 25. Deaf master buy sidecar for his motorbike (significant) Tell Pearson who sa it better to have loved and lost than never loved anebody and i haf face like a squashed tomato. No bombers toda chiz as I had counted on them and done no prep. Term draws on leafs fall, foopal matches, rags and toughery. Gran send telegram to sa on no account are we to go to canada as it is not allowed.

Nov. 26. 10000000 secs to Xmas and boo to Germans. the end.



"How do I know you're not a parachutist in disguise?"



"And is THAT just some of our own A.A. stuff as well?"

Passing of a Hurricane

AS I walked down by Lewis Lane
To buy a roasting duck
There passed a broken Hurricane
Dismembered on a truck.

Her wings lay folded at her side,
A blackened, tattered pall,
And gaping bullet-holes supplied
The context of her fall.

The canvas discs which normally
Screen the eight gun-vents' blast
Were shot away—brave proof that she
Fell firing to the last.

She went, and as I sought my roast
I thanked her for the day
When high above the Kentish coast
She dived into the fray

And quite alone, no friends to see,
Fought twenty Messerschmitts
Who, having scored but one to three,
Repented of their *blitz*.

Then sudden, as I stopped and stood,
A roar came deep and strong—
A squadron of her sisterhood
Throating their battle-song.



PLAN OF CHAMPAGNE OR THE RAPID TRAVELLER

"Sorry you couldn't meet that good fellow Franco. He's just gone out."

Mr. PUNCH'S HOSPITAL COMFORTS FUND

(Registered under the War Charities Act, 1940)

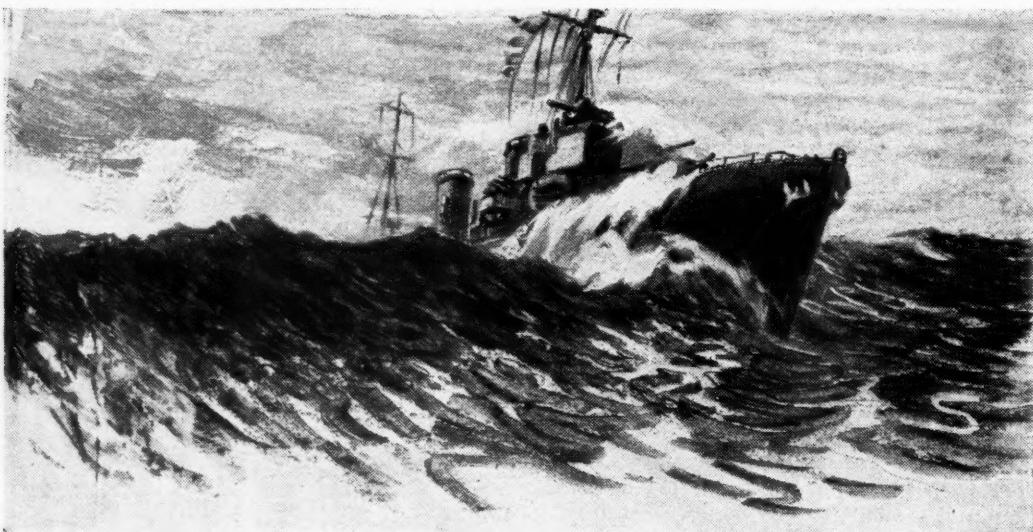
THIS Fund, which was originally started in order to purchase supplies of raw material and distribute them to Voluntary Working Parties for the Hospitals, has already sent out a very large quantity of Knitting Wool, Unbleached Calico and Veltex, as well as many other materials of all varieties, to be made up into comforts for the wounded.

The number of casualties now caused by the indiscriminate bombing of London and other cities has made it necessary to extend the operation of our Fund to the provision of medical and surgical supplies for civilian hospitals.

At the same time the approach of winter is causing a renewed demand on behalf of all the Services—especially amongst the men whose duty lies in exposed situations—for Balaclava helmets, gloves, mittens, woollen waistcoats, and the like.

Mr. Punch, in expressing his very sincere gratitude for the generous help already given by subscribers, renews therefore his appeal both for the sake of the Fighting Services and of civilians who have suffered from the ruthless barbarity of the enemy, in the hope that plenty of supplies may be available for all, now, before the severest and coldest weather sets in.

Though we know well that these are days of great financial difficulty, we yet ask you, those who can, to send some donation, large or small, according to your means, to PUNCH HOSPITAL COMFORTS FUND, 10 Bouverie Street, London, E.C.4.



"Sailor, My Sailor"

WHAT have you brought me, sailor, my sailor—
What have you brought to me home from the
sea?
Have you brought me fine silks from the markets of Araby,
Spices and satins from far-off Cathay,
Carvings of ivory, teak or of ebony,
Soft glowing jade or fine caskets of tea,
Brassware from Samarkand, monkeys from Borneo,
Paradise plumes from the Isles of the Free?
Tell me, my sailor, what have you brought me,
What have you brought to me home from the sea?"

"What have I brought you, Margy, my Margery,
What have I brought to you home from the sea?
I have brought to you wheat for the bread of your
living,
Wool from Australia to keep you from cold,
Planes from America, iron for munitions,
Metal for arms to defend your stronghold.
I bring you tradition a thousand years building,
That trade-ships of England shall ever sail free.
That's what I bring to you, Margy, my Margery,
That's what I bring to you home from the sea."

Impressions of Parliament

Business Done

Tuesday, November 12th.—House of Lords: Tributes to Mr. Neville Chamberlain.

House of Commons: Tributes to Mr. Chamberlain; Criticism of the Government Chief Whip; the inevitable Secret Session.

Wednesday, November 13th.—House of Lords: Inaudible Statement by Lord Reith on the Works and Buildings Dept.

House of Commons: Announcement of Naval Victory over Italy; Secret Session once more; Debate on Rail Fares and the Railways.

Tuesday, November 12th.—Britain has lost one of its great figures. The House of Commons, meeting in saddened mood, felt that it had lost one of its most brilliant and at the same time one of its most human and kindly Members.

Few Members can recall the time when NEVILLE CHAMBERLAIN—who died on November 9th—was not “part” of the House, even though he first entered it as an M.P. only in 1918. And so it was with a real sense of personal loss that the House gathered to hear from Mr. CHURCHILL as nobly-phrased a tribute as statesman ever paid to statesman.

It was all the more impressive and moving to those who, like your present scribe, had seen NEVILLE CHAMBERLAIN and WINSTON CHURCHILL in mortal combat in those (happily) far-off days when there was time and stomach for political strife.

All that, as Mr. CHURCHILL said, was hushed by the news—stabbing suddenly, with the treachery of the assassin—of Mr. CHAMBERLAIN’s grave illness, and silenced by the swift-following tidings of his death.

The House of Commons, like all human institutions, has its hateful moods. It also has its moods of deeply moving dignity and sincerity.

Looking mournfully at the gap on the Treasury Bench, the House listened in silence to Mr. CHURCHILL’s eulogy of the tall, dark, shy man who had so

contradicted by events, to be cheated by a wicked man.

Yet CHAMBERLAIN’S, when he made his strenuous efforts for peace, were surely among the most noble and benevolent instincts of the human heart. He searched for peace, disdaining popularity and clamour.

HITLER declared that his only desire was for peace, but what did all his ravings count before the silence of the tomb of NEVILLE CHAMBERLAIN? The ex-Prime Minister had died, though, with the comfort of knowing that his country, which he loved and served so well, had turned the corner of fate.

Mr. ATTLEE, for the Labour section of the Government, and Sir ARCHIBALD SINCLAIR, for the Liberals, added their tributes.

Then veteran Mr. GEORGE LAMBERT, who could recall the days of NEVILLE’s father, the immortal JOE, added his little personal word. The great action NEVILLE CHAMBERLAIN took at Munich had brought him bitter criticism, but at least it gave thousands of Britain’s young men another year to live, Britain herself another year to prepare for the cruel war that was thrust upon her.

Mr. LAMBERT offered this epitaph: “A selfless patriot, who gave his life for his country.”

There was a silence of seconds. Then Mr. SPEAKER rose and, in quiet, carefully-controlled, businesslike tones, announced: “The Clerk will now proceed to read the Orders of the Day.”

That, your scribe (who had the honour of CHAMBERLAIN’S personal friendship) feels, he would have preferred to all other epitaphs. The House went on, saddened but determined, with its work. CHAMBERLAIN had wished it thus.

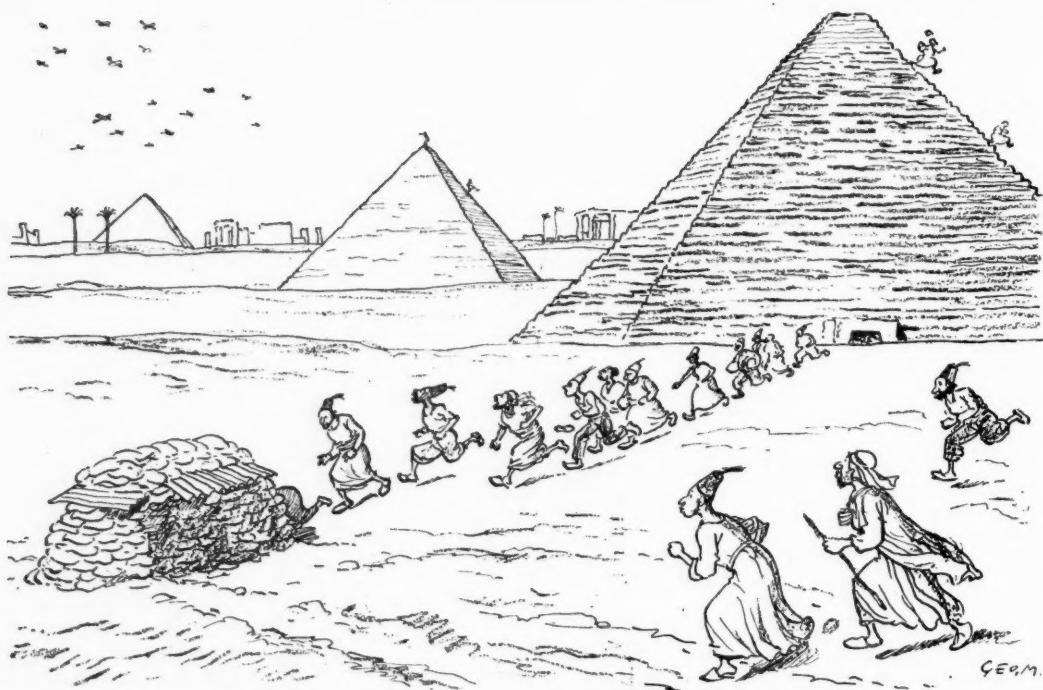
Mr. “CRINKS” HARCOURT JOHNSTON, Secretary to the Department of Over-



This cartoon of the late Mr. Neville Chamberlain, entitled “Thirty Years On” and illustrating his determination to carry on his father’s campaign for Tariff Reform, appeared in the issue of *Punch* dated February 10th, 1932, when he was Chancellor of the Exchequer in Mr. Ramsay MacDonald’s Coalition Government.

often laid about him, so often done battle, and yet who had never been ungenerous, or petty, or mean.

“A very grievous loss” was the PRIME MINISTER’S description of the bereavement all had suffered. The only guide to a man was his conscience, his only shield rectitude and sincerity. Even failure, with these, left the man in the ranks of honour. It had fallen to NEVILLE CHAMBERLAIN in the supreme crisis of the world to be



seas Trade, celebrated a rare appearance on the Treasury Bench by sporting what must surely have been the biggest and pinkest carnation seen there for generations. He also coined a new piece of officialese: "The answer is generally in the affirmative." Which ought to be cautious enough for anybody!

Red-headed Miss ELLEN WILKINSON, O.C. Air-Raid Shelters, sharply reminded critics that it was impossible to make a decision about more deep shelters on a Thursday and get miners digging them on a Monday. Mr. EMANUEL SHINWELL, her erstwhile colleague on the Labour benches, being awkward, wanted to know why she sought to "pass the buck" to other Members of the Government.

"I wish honourable Members would realize—" began Miss WILKINSON, but the SPEAKER intervened, and we shall never know what was the hiatus in the realization of the faithful Commons.

Mr. OSBERT PEAKE, of the Home Office, contributed this gem to the sum of human knowledge and wisdom: "It is not a good thing to decide anything in principle until you are in a position to put it into practice."

Communist Mr. GALLACHER, looking down the long vista of his years of

principle, unrelieved by hope of practice, looked doubtful of this dogma.

After the sincerity of the farewell speeches to NEVILLE CHAMBERLAIN there seemed something unreal and altogether trivial in the brief debate raised by "rebel" Captain VYVYAN ADAMS about the position and future of the Government Chief Whip, Captain DAVID MARGESSON.

One gathered from the gallant Member's speech that blame for all the ills the world is heir to, from HITLER to the occasional failure of the public services, was rightly to be laid at blushing DAVID MARGESSON's door. Everything that Governments for years past had done—or was it only the bad and mistaken things?—could be traced to him and his Gestapo-like Whips' Office. Captain ADAMS even blamed Captain MARGESSON for the air-raids on London!

It was not quite clear what he wanted the somewhat bewildered House to do about it, but it appeared that he wanted another Chief Whip—and that right quickly.

Captain ADAMS evidently enjoyed the speech immensely. Once or twice he seemed on the verge of breaking off to cheer his own sentiments—possibly because nobody else showed the slightest inclination to do so.

The Conservative Chief Whip was defended from his Conservative attacker by Socialist Mr. CLEMENT ATTLEE, who said that any complaints about policy ought to be sent to The Cabinet, Downing Street, London, S.W.1, and not to Captain MARGESSON.

Mr. LEECH, coming (most unexpectedly) to the Chief Whip's aid, said ironically that he had never realized how great a man this MARGESSON was—a greater man than any Premier, any Cabinet. For he decided all.

"If all this is true," said Mr. LEECH, wonder in his tones, "we have a very marvellous gentleman in this House."

Mr. TOM MAGNAY, apropos of nothing in particular, weighed in with the statement that Captain MARGESSON "was not an angel," adding: "I have never met an angel yet."

To which someone opposite ungenerously, if wittily, retorted: "You never will!"

The doubtful honour of resolving the House into its semi-chronic state of Secret Session fell to Mr. ATTLEE.

The Lords' tribute to Mr. CHAMBERLAIN was paid by Lord HALIFAX, his lifelong friend and political associate.

Wednesday, November 13th.—Mr. WINSTON CHURCHILL, showing distinct signs of the journalistic tutelage of Lord BEAVERBROOK, "presented" (to

November 20 1940

use the modern word) a thrilling account of what he rightly called a glorious episode.

It was the story of the Fleet Air Arm's attack on Taranto and the delivery of a "crippling blow" at the Italian Fleet.

"I have news for the House," said the PREMIER, beaming, and pausing artistically for the crash of applause that came at once from all parts of the House.

"It is good news!" Again the roar of cheers. Then he told, plainly and simply, how the Fleet Air Arm had smashed three out of IL DUCE's six battleships, three powerful cruisers and several auxiliary vessels.

Good news indeed! The House, which had not forgotten its resentment at the way Italy entered the war, or its hatred of international treachery, cheered again and again.

It was as part of the routine of things that Mr. CHURCHILL "spied strangers" and the House went (once more) into secret session.

But apparently even the novelty of a secret sitting palls, for in ten minutes or so the Commons returned to public debate.

At Question-time some criticism arose about the inadequacy of the B.B.C.'s Parliamentary reports. Since reports of secret sessions are *verboten*—and most of Parliament's sessions are secret these days—the complaint seemed a little unfair.

Major GWILYM LLOYD GEORGE announced that there was no shortage of soap, even where great numbers of evacuees foregathered. "Where there's life there's soap!"

When the setting up of a Moslem mosque in London was announced, Dr. EDITH SUMMERSKILL inquired: "Will the Government encourage polygamy?" Nobody answered.

The House went on to talk about railway fares and the deeds (and misdeeds) of the railways.

In the House of Lords Lord REITH was seen to make his maiden speech. This was reported to have been on the subject of the scope of his new Department—the Department of Works and Buildings—but this is pure hearsay, for nobody heard a single word the noble Lord said.

His appearance at the Dispatch Box was both patrician and impressive. But it *would* have been fascinating to know what he said.

○ ○

"An Air-Raid Shelter beautified and camouflaged with Flag Iris; 2s. 6d. doz." Advert. in *The Times*.

Or Flag Irish?

THE War Office notifies the generous public that they have made arrangements with Army Comforts Depot, Reading, to receive the following gifts for dispatch to the Army now serving in the Middle East:—

Metal shaving mirrors, sun goggles, bachelor buttons, housewives, shaving brushes, tooth brushes, soap containers, hand towels, sweets in tins,

chocolates in tins, chewing gum, toilet soap, shaving soap, razors, razor blades, writing pads and pencils.

Readers are requested to send these direct to the Officer in Charge, Army Comforts Depot, Reading, and it is hoped that by the generosity of the public every formation of the Army in its turn may receive a gift from those at home.



"What is the first rule of health, Private Scabbard?"

"Cleanliness, Sir."

"Have you attended these lectures before?"



"Very few in the Club to-day, Watkins."

Marking Time

NEVER in my life before have I had so many new clothes all at once, or at any rate not since my layette days. And clothing, mark you, for every occasion. Two blue serge suits (do we call them suits? mem.: find out) for the colder climates; two suits of ducks, doubtless for when we venture into more tropical regions; a blue jersey for winter; two white singlets, which I must remember to call "flannels," for

summer (I have long wondered whether they were whole garments or just modesty-vests); white shorts for *le sport*; an oilskin for rain; gaiters for—well, anyhow, gaiters.* Many more articles as well. Oh, yes, and the sort of knife I'd have swapped my soul for as a boy.

* Have just discovered that the gaiters, being returnable, should alone not have been marked. Fear more may be heard of this.

We have been marking all these rich possessions with our names in bold lettering, for a spirit of profound mistrust appears to exist in the Navy. I am accustomed to having a neatly unobtrusive name-tab sewn on to my personal linen, and even on to my suits, on the rare occasions when I have risen to that sort of tailor. But never before have I had my name engraved on my boots. It is engraved on my knife too, on my brushes, and even on my black japanned hat-box. But then I have never had a hat-box before, excepting strictly temporarily, when there was a wedding on foot and a hat had to be hired for it.

It is quite incredible, the mess fifty or sixty fellows can make of themselves and everything in touch when given wooden name-stamps, shown where the marking-stuff is, and instructed to get busy. All of us have marked all our things, some of them twice—once ordinarily and once in looking-glass-writing, where we have folded a garment before it was dry. And we have marked a lot of other things too while we were about it—the walls, the floors, one another and, to a very considerable extent, ourselves. Myself, I have gone so far as to mark my hair, having agitatedly clapped my hat on my head in a damp or newly-marked condition in order to avoid having it trodden on.

And we have marked both our hammocks. Why *two* hammocks? many of us ask. In our times of greatest grandeur in private days it never occurred to us to have two beds for our own use. Shakespeare, we know, had two. At least, he had a second-best bed, so it is reasonable to assume he must also have had a best bed. But then we are not all Shakespeares. Surely, as ratings, we are not expected to keep a spare bed in the fo'c'sle for any friend who happens to drop in on us? Oh, well, anyhow, we have two beds—or hammocks—now, and if you don't believe me, you have only to look at our names on them.

One zealous soul has even tried to stamp his white lanyard. The letters of his stamp being about three times as wide as the lanyard, his endeavour was unsuccessful. So was his maiden attempt at laundry-work, carried out immediately afterwards. In a way, though, his intention has been realized. That lanyard is recognizably his own property, and will remain so for a very long time.

But our lanyards are the exception. Everything else is duly stamped. We may surely be excused for thinking that, even if we have only been in the Navy a few days, we have already left our mark on it.

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Temper

I RATHER pride myself that despite almost incessant exposure to Nazi bombing my temper remains, if one may coin an expression, *en bloc*. I am afraid I cannot say the same for the Post Warden who is in charge of our A.R.P. post. This morning, when nine H.E.s dropped within ten minutes and he only had five men to send out to locate them, he was quite unnecessarily rude to a man named Gudgeon who suddenly appeared at the door of the post wearing a yellow jumper and saying that the events of the evening reminded him of the time when somebody drew Priam's curtain in the dead of night and told him half his Troy was burned. He added that he had never seen such a harmonious ensemble of reds and yellows since Vesuvius erupted in nineteen - something. The Post Warden, who before the war sold umbrellas in Petticoat Lane, unleashed reserves of invective that did him credit.

Personally I feel that keeping one's temper is one of the most necessary jobs in these times, because once we yield to our baser instincts one never knows where it will stop. It was for this reason and this reason alone that I forbore from taking a blunt instrument to Warden Glickoff over the affair of the time-bomb. I was on my way home after an arduous night's duty when I met Glickoff leaning up against a lamp-post.

"Mr. Sympson," he said, "can you relieve me for five minutes? I am guarding a time-bomb just until the police come. All you have to do is to keep people from going near it."

I said that I would be delighted. The fact is that I am rather a newcomer to the work, and I still get a thrill when I am singled out for some specially dangerous task. Glickoff hurried away, and it was not until he had gone that I realized I had forgotten to ask him where the time-bomb was. So when a cart came along full of vegetables I did not know which street to tell the carter he must not go along.

"I am sorry," I said sternly, "but you must go back. There is a time-bomb about."

"Where?" he asked. He was that sort of man.

"Up one of those streets," I said tersely. (There were three streets.) "I don't know which one the time-bomb is in, but you would be very foolish to risk it."

I still feel that I was unlucky in

drawing that particular carter. He said a word to his horse and then climbed down and started arguing. I fancy he must have won a scholarship to a school that specialized in mathematics in the distant past when he was a boy.

"There are three streets," he said, "so the chances are one in three that I shall not choose the street that has the time-bomb. It will take me roughly two minutes to pass through the danger area, and the time-bomb may not go off for twenty-four hours, or 1,440 minutes, which makes my chance of getting blown up only two-thirds of 1,440, or roughly one in 2,160. If, on the other hand, I am late with these vegetables the chances are about nine

pineapples to a cat's whisker that I shall get the sack."

He rode on his way and, to my chagrin, did not get blown up. A few milder citizens attempted to approach but retreated, awed by my tin hat and general air of authority. They hovered about at a safe distance, and quite a crowd gathered. An hour passed away, and no police came. I began to wonder what had happened, and then Glickoff came back and asked me what I was hanging about for.

"Guarding the time-bomb," I said.

He laughed.

"Didn't anybody tell you?" he asked. "They found the hole was made by some people who went away and took down their wireless aerial."



"O.K! Full speed ahead!"



Our Booking-Office
(By Mr. Punch's Staff of Learned Clerks)

The Cockrell Post-Bag

A good letter is largely a tribute to its recipient; and the letters addressed to Sir SYDNEY COCKERELL and edited by Miss VIOLA MEYNELL in *Friends of a Lifetime* (CAPE, 18/-) are a tribute, a treasure-trove of character and a fascinating series of social documents. The hub of their world is pre-Raphaelite, but there are wide radiations. Here RUSKIN bids his young worshipper abolish the West End in order to abolish the East End; TOLSTOI proclaims his personal friendship with the characters of DICKENS; OUIDA abuses the Italian count who shot a thousand swallows; and CUNNINGHAME GRAHAM commiserates OUIDA. BERNARD SHAW and Mr. BALDWIN figure as admirers of MAY MORRIS; WILFRID SCAVEN BLUNT crows over his place in *The Oxford Book of English Verse*; YEATS pleads for a lyric life "without dates" or "a settled abode"; and HARDY refuses to read *Wuthering Heights* because of "its unrelieved ugliness." And lest the Victorian sunset seem too roseate, a most un-dovelike quarrel over the Dove's Press, in which type and matrices are flung into the Thames, exhibits the chivalrous, versatile and sympathetic Sir SYDNEY for once—and once only—in the rôle of the unsuccessful mediator.

Old Devonian

"We've ordained to be married in cuckoo-month," said Violet; and so, with the plot exposed and the villains driven

to go foreign to some place far ways off, there will be a happy future come presently for slow-but-honest Paul and his likeable lass. They had been tokened back along, but fell such easy victims of crude conspiracy that one almost despaired of their recovery. Mr. EDEN PHILLPOTTS scores heavily in his latest story—*Goldcross* (METHUEN, 8/6)—where the rich warm speech of Devon mixes quaintly with splashes of modern idiom, where the portentous solemnity of a patriarchal wooing harmonizes with the tags of Scripture twisted unaffectedly in every conversation, and where there is human nature on every page. Only the limitless softness of Paul shown in his quite un-Devonian readiness to accept defeat without a fight gives one pause, but even here perhaps so faithful a lover of his county as the writer may know best; and anyway one is cruelly obliged to him for *Furze* the poacher-miser, *Stanley Peters* the passionate postman, and *Hilda Ringrose*, massive and benevolent, with an unbounded faith in Providence and a tizzic in her tubes. There is countryside air in this volume, excellently refreshing in a day of two many thrills.

London River

Mr. ERNEST RAYMOND might have chosen two other titles for the third in his series of London novels, *A Song of the Tide* (CASSELL, 9/6), because he writes both about the Surrey side of the river and the seamy side of life. It is a sad, drab, grim book; more so because Roddy, a grocer's assistant, and Fay, lovely little usherette at a cinema, were dreamers who believed that life would treat them sumptuously one day. Their married life in a bed-sitting-room, Fay's young visions, Roddy's jealousy and smothered ambitions, plus the interference of friends and relations, nag them on to the tragic climax. Mr. RAYMOND writes knowledgeably, though lushly, of the private lives of assistants in small shops, lodging-house keepers and cinema attendants. He sees the gold of pride gleaming through the dust of poverty and realizes the hopelessness of makeshift lives, but he could have minced his words a little more without making sacrifice to reality, and he should have allowed his Londoners more sense of humour. Still, it is not his fault that the book is out of



time and that we need gaiety in fiction more than ever just now.

Smash-and-Grab in the Pacific

Unquestionably an apposite book, *The Story of the Pacific* (HARRAP, 8/6) might perhaps have been even more entertaining than it is, while a trifle more solidly informative. We are most of us largely at the mercy of any retailer of South Sea lore; for when you have said CORTES, TASMAN, Captain Cook, R. L. S. and the Panama Canal, you have produced most of our stock reactions to the word "Pacific." But if Mr. HENDRIK VAN LOON had done no more than portray that ocean's Polynesian past he would have deserved well of us all. And this, *inter alia*, he has done: the story of the double canoes which traversed that wilderness of waters seven centuries before the Spanish galleons proving the most enjoyable part of a somewhat haphazard volume. The natives, he suggests, were apparently disheartened by want of scope for head-hunting and other congenial employment even before the arrival of guns, gin and missionaries. (His attitude toward missionaries is, as a Shakespearean duchess once said of a more pardonable exhibition of childlessness, both tetchy and wayward.) But his statement that Polynesia is getting its own back on "civilization" in GAUGUIN and Hollywood glamour has a ring of sardonic truth.

Again—but not Again

The Sons of the Others (HUTCHINSON, 8/6) again fight to-day the battle for freedom their fathers fought less than twenty-five years ago. The title chosen by Sir PHILIP GIBBS for his moving tale of another glorious retreat ending on Dunkirk Beach fittingly expresses the inmost tragedy of this cruel and tragic war. For the sons who barely six months ago fought beneath cloudless skies over the battle-scarred fields of France and Flanders surely did not fight alone. At Bapaume and at Peronne, on the Vimy Ridge and around Arras their thinning ranks were joined by a ghostly army awakened from their deathless sleep to watch their sons, like themselves—the Others—in former days, refuse to accept defeat. In a style admirable for its restraint Sir PHILIP describes the scenes in the towns and villages of Northern France through which the B.E.F. doggedly fought its way to the sea. If pessimism and defeatism occasionally made their appearance, there was also abundance of that calm resolution and love of *la patrie* that has made the French peasantry such doughty fighters. A charming love-story is skilfully woven into the warp of war.

Mr. Mencken's Youth

To say that Mr. H. L. MENCKEN's "account of his first twelve years" in *Happy Days, 1880-1892* (KEGAN PAUL, 15/-) is exceedingly readable and continuously entertaining



THE FINISHING TOUCH

Maid (to Jones, who has come to grief while making frantic efforts to put up a new light-proof blind). "IF YOU PLEASE, SIR, THERE'S A CONSTABLE AT THE DOOR WITH A SUMMONS FOR YOU FOR SHOWING TOO MUCH LIGHT."

Thomas Henry, November 22nd, 1916.

is to say comparatively little, for most competent writers seem to be able to produce good work about their youth. What gives this book its unique flavour, apart from the subject—the Baltimore of the 'eighties is by no means an overworked theme—is the author's highly spiced and seasoned style, his immense and all-embracing vocabulary, his choice of epithets that range endearingly from exactitude through preciousness to wild exaggeration. He should not perhaps be read at great length: it is possible, though unlikely, that even his warmest admirers may grow wearied, may think after several chapters that he sometimes leans over backwards to avoid the ordinary word; but most readers will agree that to do this in every sentence is better than leaning over forwards to grasp it, as is the way of too many solid autobiographers. It is in fact a refreshing and stimulating change to find negroes described as Aframeicans or blackamoors and whites as Caucasians, shops as the marts of commerce, the rest as the nether moiety, the food of the country as its indigenous victuals—provided that the writer wishes for that precise effect and knows what he is doing. The author of *The American Language*, "the doyen of American littérateurs," is very well aware of this; moreover, his youth was happy, and he recalls a vast amount of fascinating detail about his early circumstances. This is a good, rich, informative, cheerful and amusing book.

Kai Lung Relates the Story of Chung Pun and the Miraculous Peacocks.

"It is to the credit of an authority if he administers praise and blame impartially; the fault lies at the door of the one concerned if either praise or blame is taken wrongly. This," reflected Kai Lung, "suggests the story of Chung Pun, who may be said to have justified it."

WHEN Chung Pun returned from the provincial capital with no distinctive characters to adorn his name it did not require the aid of an enlarging-glass to disclose that his home-coming failed to create successive waves of gladness. It was in vain that he drew attention to the harmonious balance, both in design and hue, of the robes he wore, to the novel and pleasing arrangement of his gracefully-looped hair, his long and work-un-sullied finger-nails, the refined and expensively-maintained associations he had formed, and his carefully-displayed air of no-interest. The elder Chung, a person of simple habits and extreme reticence towards any taste, whose one ambition had been to see Pun add a literary flavour to his own commercial strain, was not appeased by this evidence of glamour.

"Peacocks do not necessarily lay rainbow-coloured eggs," he declared, "nor has the variegation of your many robes brought the expected lustre to our Family Tablets."

"Peacocks do not lay eggs of any colour, Esteemed," was Pun's perhaps indiscreet reply, "that function being the jealously-guarded prerogative of the lesser ones of the species."



"The elder Chung . . . was not appeased by this evidence of glamour."

"The objection is both superficial and inept," warmly contested Chung, "seeing that the apophthegm was to be understood only in the general terms of analogy. However, since the extent of your acquired knowledge would seem to comprise a single agricultural fact, henceforth your destiny shall lie in that direction."

Despite Pun's well-expressed protests that to be condemned to the society of goats and oafs would stifle his better instincts, the one whose word he must obey was not to be swayed in his project.

"Whether your path will thereby lead up or down remains for the Deciding Beings to say," Chung replied to all his pleading. He thereupon directed Pun regarding the journey he should make and the point of his destination, supplied him with food and wine and a few small pieces of money for the way, and, as an after-thought, added his blessing.

It did not take a moon to fade for Pun to discover that the qualities that had so deplorably failed to impress the elder Chung harvested less snow with a gross and tyrannical earth-tiller. Commanded to rise at an unseemly gong-stroke of the day, and with the aid of a perverse-willed tool to remove from the pig-yard to a distant spot a distressingly offensive load that would be more nutritious elsewhere, Pun found his carefully-preserved nails to be no assistance in the task, while his richly-laced robe came apart several times under the excessive pressure. Those to whom he applied, seeking to know how he might acquire a more effective grasp, replied with derisive shouts, inaccurate advice that tended to involve him in undignified straits, or merely allusive gestures. Forced by the ill-conditioned attitude of those around towards a wholly introspective mood, Pun began to reconsider the past, and before long he was willing to admit that there might be something on his side that would not be entirely pleasing to the fastidious. From this point onwards he progressed so far that before the rice was sown he would frequently declare aloud that to toil for the one whom he did, and be compelled to associate with the ones who were there, was only a just and suitable return for the misspent years he had squandered.

Doubtless the time had now arrived when the Deciding Beings, upon whose shoulders the elder Chung had rather craftily thrust the responsibility of deciding his son's future, would have made up their sacred but complicated minds what course to adopt; but in order to extricate Chung Pun from the position into which he had been led, now that some expiation and an admission of his unworthy past justified his emergence, it is necessary to contrive a reasonable excuse, and towards this end Shin-tao must be pressed forward into the recital.

Shin-tao lived alone in the darker part of an impenetrable forest that stretched towards the east, and on this account he was generally reputed to be either excessively wise or else of deficient understanding. Driven by the forbidding front of those among whom he moved to seek other paths, Pun had frequently turned his footsteps towards Shin-tao's retreat, nor, when they chanced to meet, had the latter person shown any desire to avoid him.

"Yet how comes it," had been one of his earliest demands as they conversed in a free and convenient manner, "that you who are shunned and remote should have a cheerful and benign outlook, while those who hold you in undeserved contempt are both morose and domineering?"

"That is in the nature of our several moods," Pun generously admitted, "they being thus and thus in temper.

Formerly I would have bewailed my lost inheritance and sought to constrain their love, but while I have my own thoughts I now count myself neither poor nor friendless."

This answer so pleased Shin-tao that he burned the substance of it deeply into a block of teak, using a pointed nail,



"... to remove from the pig-yard ... a distressingly offensive load."

and he afterwards hung the wood above the entrance to his dwelling.

It was at a later period of their mutual regard that Shin-tao referred to an analogous theme, for by this time there was no constraint between them.

"Seeing that your qualities are thus and thus," he said, "and have doubtless brought you some reward and honour, why should you be content to labour for a meagre wage in a house destitute of pleasure?"

"As to that," replied Pun, though with less freedom in his speech, "the answer must necessarily be long and involved and our time would be much more profitably spent in discussing the obscurer Classics." Then, remembering the elder Chung's apophthegm on his return, he added: "The qualities to which you so amiably refer, Shin-tao, were not always apparent. Peacocks do not necessarily lay rainbow-coloured eggs nor he who is flamboyant produce epics."

At this Shin-tao regarded Pun somewhat closely, but seeing nothing in the other's face to disturb his confidence he said, "It is in the nature of a fore-ordained sign that you should quote that paradox to me, seeing that I am the one person alone who is able to expose its falsity."

"Disclose yourself more fully," urged Pun. "Not only are the eggs in question of inconspicuous hue but the statement contains a subtle incongruity."

"Yet that which exists cannot be disproved," asserted Shin-tao, "for not even demons can do what is impossible. . . . In the depths of the forest here there lurks a secluded glen, the spot being known to none beyond the one who is now confiding the circumstances to your ear, since this would seem to be necessary for your destined future. In the past certain deities made this hidden valley their resort and called to it all manner of delightful things to add

to their entertainment. Thus it came about that T'a Kwey, the divinity tutelary to the chromatic arts, seeing a peacock for the first time here, laid an injunction on the place that the species should propagate there for ever."

"That is likely enough," assented Pun, "as regards yourself, the deities and the valley. But peafowl eggs are of an unrelieved brown, as this one can definitely say, he having frequently eaten several at a time during his vainglorious days in order to enhance the brilliance of a naturally dull complexion. Nor is there any reason to believe that they are produced other than in the normal routine of nature."

"Doubtless it would have been so here, but the deity's injunction had been precise, and it so happened that by an oversight none of the lesser ones of the race involved—destitute as they were of external charm—had been transported to the sacred valley. It thus devolved upon the peacocks themselves to, as it were, adapt their habits to a new and obviously miraculous rôle which has now persisted for a number of aeons. It is to signalize the higher Powers' approval of this devotion to their word that the eggs found there are rainbow-hued and scintillate with an iridescent lustre."

This explanation threw Pun into a deep concern, for it did not seem feasible that so intricate a chain of events should not be connected with his own development. At length he said:

"What you disclose, Shin-tao, only goes to confirm that this one—as he has always dimly foreseen—is in some way marked out for a very distinguished career."

"That is my own opinion as well," agreed Shin-tao, "and it is for this reason that—having been advised in several dreams—everything has been laid bare without reservation."



"The local mandarin to whom be . . . diffidently applied fell on his face."

"Since we are at one to that extent, would not your magnanimity allow you to go a step further?"

"In which direction?" inquired Shin-tao. "Do not hesitate to put your advancement before any thought of high-minded feeling."

"Bearing an offering of these sacred eggs, added to a recital of their miraculous origin, is it to be thought that

any door will be closed against a reasonable petition for recognition? Thus a venerated if obtuse-witted father's no doubt excusable annoyance would be appeased, the short-sighted decision of a corrupt and intellectually knock-kneed Board of Examiners reversed, and the way open for an obliged and influential Central Authority to express tangible approbation."

"All this has been foreseen through the instrumentality of accorded visions," replied Shin-tao, "and the path is thereby paved for your speedy departure." With these encouraging words he produced a double hand-count of eggs such as he had described, as well as an adequacy of nourishing fare to sustain Pun in his mission. They then exchanged a suitable farewell verse from the Book of Odes and turned their reluctant footsteps into opposite directions.

Thereafter Pun's progress was necessarily upwards and smooth, for bearing such a gift it is not to be thought that any obstacles would presume to impede his movements. The local mandarin to whom he at first diffidently applied fell on his face and kowtowed several times when he beheld the eggs and understood the nature of their origin. Declaring himself quite unworthy to do more than beat his head on the marble floor in the presence of such a wonder, he provided Pun with a pink-upholstered chair and a bodyguard of three intrepid bowmen with an embroidered flag, and directed him to the district superior. Here Pun was received with scarcely less ceremony, the functionary bowing almost as many times as the last, while adding a blue-lined chair as well as five unarmed but loud-voiced warriors and a silk-tasselled banner. Thence he was sent to the departmental overlord, who cordially shook hands with himself with effusive warmth and, contributing lavishly to the dignity of Pun's suite, passed him on to the viceroy of the province. . . . When, finally, Pun entered the capital of the sovereign land, to be received by the Sublime himself, he led a procession of three-score variously coloured chairs, five state chariots drawn by elephants or camels, innumerable wheel-barrows laden with seasonable food, flags, banners, trophies of war on poles, wild animals in chains, many changes of raiment to denote his superior rank, and several thousand ordinary persons.

When the enraptured Monarch (who dispensed with

formality to such an extent that he graciously permitted Pun to raise his face slightly from the ground to relieve his breath when speaking) actually received the semi-sacred eggs and beheld their prismatic splendour, he called the inscriber of his spoken word and commanded him to set down in irrevocable form whatever Pun chose to ask for the service.

"If it can be done without unduly straining the Code, Omnipotence," was Pun's modest reply, "the bestowal of a suitable literary degree would not only restore your abject suppliant's momentarily misplaced face but should reinstate an ever-dutiful if occasionally outspoken-tongued

son in the affection of a revered though admittedly concave-stomached parent."

"Nothing could be in better taste," heartily replied the All-Supreme, immeasurably relieved that, in accordance with his hasty pledge, Pun had not claimed something of a pecuniary or territorial nature. "As there might be some slight technical difficulty in conferring a heath or flower-plot degree, we will institute for the purpose a new distinction, to be called the Order of the Brilliant Fowl (its contracted colloquialism being styled 'B.F.'), to be conferred henceforth on similar honourable occasions."

"Your illimitable condescension fills my unworthy entrails with fervent song," was wrung from Pun's grateful throat. "Let it be said—"

"While we are about it," continued the Most-All, with a truly royal determination not to stint merit, "there is no good reason why your praiseworthy father should be left out,

seeing that bereft of his timely share this memorable occasion could not have arisen. He also, therefore, together with your commendable great-father and all your fortunate male forerunners in fact, may, on similar grounds, be styled honourable B.F.s henceforward."

To this fresh evidence of the Greatest's fostering care for subjects so negligible as themselves Pun could only reply by the passionate clashing of his overflowing head on the onyx pavement of the Hall of Ten Thousand Stars in Motion. The usual loyal cry, "May you live for ever, Revered, and beget a countless tribe of lusty he-children!" would have sounded too thin and circumscribed to express an insignificant drop from the fathomless depths of his unbounded devotion.



"When, finally, Pun entered the capital of the sovereign land . . ."

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